

# The JIATF Fusion Center: A Next-Generation<sup>of</sup> Operations Cell for Consequence Management

by LtCol Michael G. Dana

*Current JTFs are not well suited to disaster relief/consequence management. This article provides an alternative organization.*

The success of humanitarian relief operations hinges on the ability of a joint task force (JTF) or host nation authorities to coordinate relief efforts rapidly and effectively. Disaster relief operations are time sensitive and usually involve numerous governmental agencies, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and host nation players. Coordinating the activities of these disparate agencies, while simultaneously saving lives and minimizing suffering, places great demands on the controlling authority.

During European Command's disaster relief exercise AGILE LION in July 1997, a Marine-led JTF wrestled with these very challenges. The activities of various governmental, NGO, and Department of Defense (DoD) organizations were synchronized by JTF AGILE LION (JTF-AL), formed to coordinate international relief efforts for a (simulated) nuclear reactor meltdown in Ingalina, Lithuania. JTF-AL was built around the since-disbanded Marine Corps' Standing JTF and had representatives from the De-

partment Energy (DoE), Department of State (DoS), DoD, International Atomic Energy Agency, various international relief agencies, and the Government of Lithuania. JTF-AL achieved mission success through Herculean staff effort, but the traditional JTF architecture hindered rapid information flow and timely completion of mission essential tasks. The purpose of this article is to outline a new JTF organization, one that creates a task organization best suited for disaster relief operations.

Exercise AGILE LION revealed our current JTF headquarters structure does not facilitate the planning, coordination, or support of disaster relief (DR) or consequence management (CM) operations. JTFs normally orchestrate operations through task organized, functional centers manned by personnel drawn from the traditional (J-1 through J-6) staff sections. For instance, the Joint Planning Group (JPG) pulls together personnel from each staff section to provide functional representation during crisis action planning. The Joint Operations Center (JOC), composed of functional representatives, provides the commander situational awareness and time-sensitive current operations updates. In this same vein, the Joint Logistics Readiness Center (JLRC), Joint Surveillance, Intelligence, Fusion Center (JSIFC), and Civil-Military Operations Center each provide a vehicle for information exchange and coordination of functionally specific operations. These organizations are manpower heavy, increase forward deployed footprint, and consume scarce communications and logistics assets. Worse yet, these functional centers don't facilitate timely conduct of DR/CM activities. A step toward rectifying this problem would be creating a joint interagency task force fusion center (JIATF fusion center). This fusion center would be a stand alone, forward deployed planning/execution center of gravity for the JIATF designed to facilitate realtime coordination between military, national, and international organizations. This fusion center would integrate operational functions and facilitate interagency cooperation communication. More importantly, manpower requirements could be reduced through the collocation of key personnel in a robust command, coordination, and control facility with reachback capability to home station staffs. The new structure calls for a confederation of key decision-makers equipped with the mental, technological, and operational tools to provide rapid, effective, and near real-time solutions to complex, time-sensitive problems.

The impetus for the proposed JIATF fusion center came from the following lessons learned during AGILE LION:

**Location.** The physical separation of the various sections of the JTF staff (JOC, JLRC, etc.) encouraged stovepiped staff action. The amount of information provided by automated systems compounded this problem. Information management was time and labor intensive; each section focused inward in their attempt to harness the information dragon. Each functional center processed and synthesized information in isolation, thereby inhibiting information sharing and lateral staff coordination.

#### **ACRONYMS**

**ADP: Automated Data Processing**  
**CDR: Commander**  
**COS: Chief of Staff**  
**CM: Consequence Management**  
**DR: Disaster Relief**  
**DoD: Department of Defense**  
**DoE: Department of Energy**  
**DoS: Department of State**  
**HNS: Host Nation Support**  
**HRO: Humanitarian Relief Organization**  
**HQ: Headquarters**  
**IO: Information Operations**  
**JTF: Joint Task Force**  
**JTF-AL: JTF AGILE LION**  
**JIATF: Joint Interagency Task Force**  
**JOC: Joint Operations Center**  
**JPG: Joint Planning Group**  
**JLRC: Joint Logistics Readiness Center**  
**JSIFC: Joint Surveillance, Intelligence, Fusion Center**  
**MOE: Measures of Effectiveness**  
**NGO: Nongovernmental Organization**  
**NRTF: Nuclear Response Task Force**  
**QA Branch: Quality Assurance Branch**  
**UN: United Nations**  
**USGO: U.S. Government Organization**  
**VTC: Video Teleconferencing**

**Communications.** Information management is more than passing information. Effective communications prioritizes critical information and facilitates the accomplishment of required actions. Systems and procedures that enhance *information sharing* and *comprehension* are

vital to communications. Disseminating commander's intent and vision, defining desired end state (mission success), establishing common terms of reference, and creating coherent commonality of purpose for all players (military, governmental, and nongovernmental) are essential tasks for effective communications in a JIATF. A differentiation must be made between information management and information application.

**Organization and processes.** A functionally configured JTF staff structure supports execution of conventional military operations. This architecture fits hand-in-glove with traditional staff planning processes (e.g., mission analysis, course of action development, etc.) The planning center of gravity in this type organization is the commander. In DR CM, the center of gravity is information sharing and coordination harmonization of operations. In a purely military model, these functions are a means to an end. In the future CM model, they are an end in themselves. The JIATF commander is more facilitator than commander, more diplomat than warrior. (Unlike high-intensity conflict, the host nation retains final say on what events actions transpire within its borders.)

Time management, rapid dissemination of information, and unity of effort among disparate players is critical. We need an organization that supports decentralized, but coordinated, execution of operations and participatory, yet guided, command. Integrated, secure, and rapid information connectivity is the communications glue that holds this model together. A multifunctional, fused operations center is the vehicle for harmonized JIATF operations. Figure 1 depicts its proposed organization.

#### **Physical Characteristics**

**Circular; three tiered.** The fusion center model is coliseum shaped. An executive steering committee composed of high-level decisionmakers from the host nation and contingency-specific agencies lead from the first ring or "bull-pit." The second ring contains senior duty experts from appropriate agencies/host nation, grouped together in functional discipline-specific cells. The first and second ring workstations are open, thereby facilitating rapid and

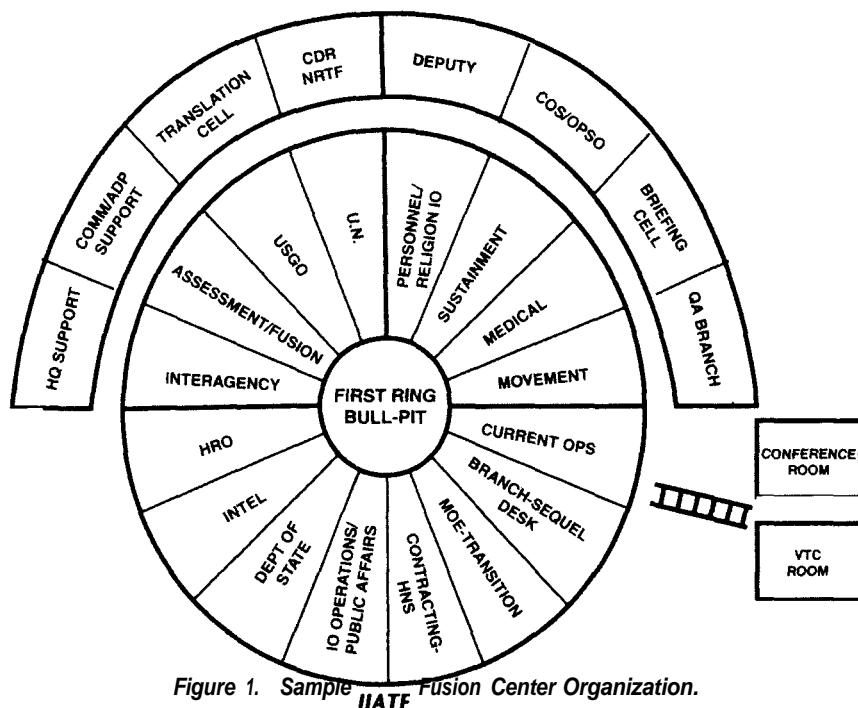


Figure 1. Sample JIATF Fusion Center Organization.

continuous information exchange. A Wall Street atmosphere of “organized chaos” prevails. The third ring contains a “press box” section where the commander and deputy commander observe, monitor, and provide guidance to personnel as required. Translation, logistics support, training, communications/automatic data processing (ADP), and briefing personnel work out of the press box stations. The fusion center has a cylindrical, theater-shaped configuration (e.g., similar to a basketball or hockey arena, but smaller in size).

**Location.** The fusion center is located where it can best:

1. Coordinate with the lead host nation agency for consequence management.
2. Maximize use of existing telecommunications systems.
3. Maintain security and life support for deployed personnel.

### Unique Operating Procedures

**No formal briefs by first and second ring players.** Briefs cause operational pause, degrade meaningful dialog, emphasize form over substance, and provide a snapshot, rather than an overview of the common operational picture. Briefs are conducted by the “briefing cell” resident in the third ring press box section. Informal briefs by first and second ring players are event specific, ad hoc in na-

ture, and tailored to orient participants and solve the task at hand (vice making the brief so formal and burdened with PowerPoint that we make the “mission the brief,” instead of briefing the mission). Higher headquarters should push distilled information to the JIATF, not vice versa.

**Reports are not compiled by first and second ring players.** Reports are produced by the reports section in the third ring press box section. Similar to a sports event, personnel in the trenches don’t compile data statistics. First and second ring players develop coordinated solutions to time-sensitive problems through information sharing and maximum use of synthesized knowledge (provided by reachback teams).

**No uniforms for first and second ring players.** Uniforms create psychological barriers and information firewalls in a JIATF.

**Reachback capability critical.** Fusion center members are decisionmakers, not staff officers. This decreases onsite personnel and equipment footprint. Reachback organizations distill mountains of information into usable knowledge for onsite decisionmakers.

**Civilian focus, civilian lead.** The commander of the JIATF is selected from the agency whose resident capabilities and expertise best match required crisis response. A senior representative from the DoE could be the JIATF commander for response to a nuclear dis-

aster. In consequence management, the U.S. military provides operational capability through time-tested planning processes; robust command, control, communications, computers, and intelligence (C4I); and logistics without. These functions must be placed in a supporting, rather than lead role. We achieve mission success by bringing the right personnel together in a first-rate command, communications, and coordination facility.

### Technological Requirements.

**User friendly** (voice activated or touch pad) software providing ready access to required knowledge. Detailed information gathering, collation, and processing occurs at reachback sites that subsequently forward “distilled” data (knowledge) to the fusion center.

**Next-generation web page** that provides realtime current operational picture and significant events listing.

**Common operational picture available** on overhead (planetarium style) and on workstation computers.

**Audio and visual translation services** imbedded in workstations.

**Video teleconferencing (VTC) capability** resident at workstation level.

**Communications that are userfriendly and joint/interagency compatible.**

### Personnel and Training

**Precrisis training critical** to effective execution. Integrated, multifunctional, knowledge-based training is a must. The initial vehicle for training could include exchange tours, seminars, and future exercises patterned after AGILE LION. Opening more school seats for governmental and nongovernmental personnel in DoD formal schools would complement this effort.

**“Grey beard” personnel required.** Members of the fusion center should be experienced and senior (minimum military rank of O-6 or civilian equivalent). Each functional workstation should be manned by senior representatives from key participating organizations.

**Maximum use of liaison officers.** Liaison is required between agencies, JIATF and host nation, and organizations on the ground performing CM actions. The coordination activities of principal personnel at the fusion center must be disseminated and echoed by liaison of-

ficers at the execution or field level.

## Functional Workstations

### Third Ring:

**Headquarters Support Cell:** Coordinates for and provides life support, security, and facilities maintenance.

**Comm ADP Support Cell:** Provides technical expertise and onsite repairs to hardware and software as required. In conjunction with the second ring assessment fusion cell, facilitates the exchange of information within and throughout the JIATF.

**Translation Cell:** Provides oral and realtime written translation services.

**Commander JIATF:** Responsible for the coordination of all JIATF activities and serves as the host nation's senior representative for the United States. Acknowledged duty expert in area requiring CM (nonmilitary billet).

**Deputy Commander:** Responsible for establishing and maintaining requisite C4I and logistics to support mission needs. Provides planning guidance, processes, and structure to JIATF activities (military, flag-level billet).

**Chief of Staff:** Integrates and synchronizes day-to-day JIATF activities (civilian DoD billet; proven administrator with reputation for decisive action; minimum of Under Secretary rank).

**Operations Coordinator:** Coordinates, harmonizes, and focuses JIATF activities. Seeks coherent operations for CM.

**Briefing Cell:** Observes, collates, and condenses activities of first and second ring players into daily briefs for the JIATF commander.

**Quality Assurance Cell:** Composed of retired senior leaders from DoD, military, private corporations, governmental agencies, and NGOs. These mentors observe the first, second, and third ring players and provide constructive guidance, as requested by the commander.

### Second Ring:

**United Nations, Human Rights Organizations, DoS, Government, and Interagency** desks are skill field specific and provide unique operational input to the assessment fusion cell and first ring players.

**Assessment Fusion Cell:** Combines the activities of the JOC and JSIFC into one integrated cell. Acts as an interface between the first and second ring; seeks coherent realtime operations by



monitoring and guiding fusion center activities. Reduces stovepiped planning through creation, dissemination, and maintenance of a current operational picture. Collates intelligence, operations, and logistics functions in order to provide proactive realtime responses to events occurring within a 96-hour window.

**Branch-Sequel Desk:** Performs future operations or JPG functions; anticipates future events (96 hours and out); develops plans to most effectively respond to future events.

**Measures of Effectiveness/Transition Desk:** A subsidiary of the Branch-Sequel Desk. Works in close cooperation with the Quality Assurance (QA) Branch and evaluates the effectiveness of current operations; provides transition criteria and end state objectives for future operations.

**Information Operations/Public Affairs:** A proactive, take charge organization that seizes the initiative in media events. Lead agency for publication and clarification of the threat or event, actions planned, actions taken, and mission end state.

### First Ring:

**Executive Steering Committee:** Non-military lead; the JIATF "thinking" nerve center. Lead agency provides senior decisionmaker to be a first among equals in this "response council." Envision three or four personnel encompassing host nation, DoD, lead agency, and head NGO representative(s). The steering committee provides a link between the commander, host nation, and response cells.

At first glance the JIATF fusion cen-

ter appears to be a conventional JOC with more players. Though the physical, procedural, and personnel changes are subtle, they are evolutionary. Collocation of senior, experienced personnel, maximization of reachback capability, and the nonmilitary lead of the JIATF fusion center are steps, not blind leaps, into the future. Simple modifications to workspace relationships and configurations can increase communication and lateral coordination. Utilization of experienced gray beard duty experts in billets formerly held by junior, "generic" personnel will increase operational tempo, optimize decisionmaking, and shorten recognitional response times. Detailed, technical, and laborious staff work still occurs, but thanks to reachback capability our forward deployed footprint is decreased. The keys to the future success of interagency operations will be mutual trust, understanding, and cooperation. Exchange tours, in the field or in agency/service schools, and future exercises are the path to these joint objectives. Lastly, the JIATF fusion center is not a means to an end, but a waypoint to the future. Like an aging warplane or ship, the traditional JTF staff model still carries a punch, but upgrades are required. One idea is the JIATF fusion center, designed to bridge the gap between the consequence management requirements of tomorrow and the capabilities of today.

USMC

*Lt Col Dana is currently working in the Aviation Development Tactics and Evaluations branch of MA WTS-1 in Yuma, AZ. He spent 2 years with the Camp Lejeune-based Standing Joint Task Force, which stood down 1 July 1998.*